

Testimony in Support of Preserving the Commission on Children as a Separate Entity and Rejecting the Consolidation of the Commission on Children into the Commission on Citizen Advocacy

February 19, 2013

Submitted by: Darcy Lowell, MD, Founder and CEO, Child FIRST, Inc.

Distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am submitting my testimony in support of preserving the Commission on Children as a separate entity with a unique and steadfast focus on the health and well-being of Connecticut's children. My name is Dr. Darcy Lowell. I am an Associate Clinical Professor in the Department of Pediatrics and Child Study Center at Yale University School of Medicine. I am the Founder and Executive Director of Child FIRST, which targets our most vulnerable young children and families. Child FIRST was developed right here in Connecticut. It is now one of the few nationally recognized, HRSA designated, evidence-based home visiting models. This would never have happened without the vision, expertise, knowledge, and persistence of the Commission on Children.

The Commission on Children drives the policy that results in effective solutions. This protects the health, safety, and education of our children, especially for those in our state who are most vulnerable. The list of proactive, preventive programs that they have brought to this state through legislation is enormous, including school readiness, lead abatement, and child poverty reduction. In each case, they have not only brought additional funding to our state, but have saved us millions of dollars by preventing serious and costly problems from arising.

As a physician specializing in the development and behavior of young children, I implore you to look at what we have learned about brain science. This is a time of extremely high stress for our most vulnerable families. We know that this stress is toxic to the developing brains of young children. This adversity damages brain structure, causing learning impairment, serious emotional disturbance, and long-term health problems. The damage cannot be undone. We will need to pour millions more into our schools, hospitals, and prisons as a consequence in the future, if we ignore the science today.

The Commission on Children is the one agency with a single focus on the welfare of our children, especially the most vulnerable. It uses the science as the framework to guide decisions. It researches key issues, disseminates information, develops landmark policies, and

writes legislation. It brings funding and resources into Connecticut which far exceed the cost of the Commission. Most importantly, they are steadfast in working to give our children the best possible opportunities to grow and thrive.

Children are not an advocacy group. Children are the future of our state and of our nation. Nothing is more important. Please, preserve the Commission on Children so that it can continue its outstanding work, safeguarding the health and well-being of Connecticut's children.

Respectfully submitted:

Darcy Lowell, MD
Founder and CEO, Child FIRST, Inc.
Associate Clinical Professor
Department of Pediatrics and Child Study Center
Yale University School of Medicine